The Independent Voice of Centenary College of Louisiana Since 1922

The Conglomerate

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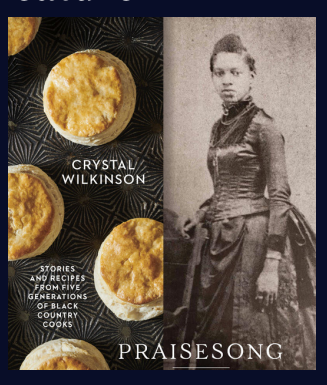
Feature



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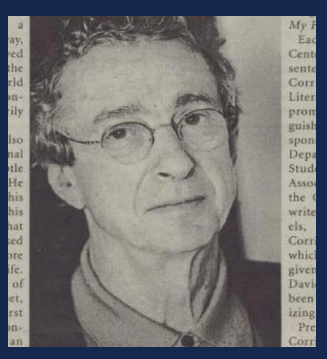

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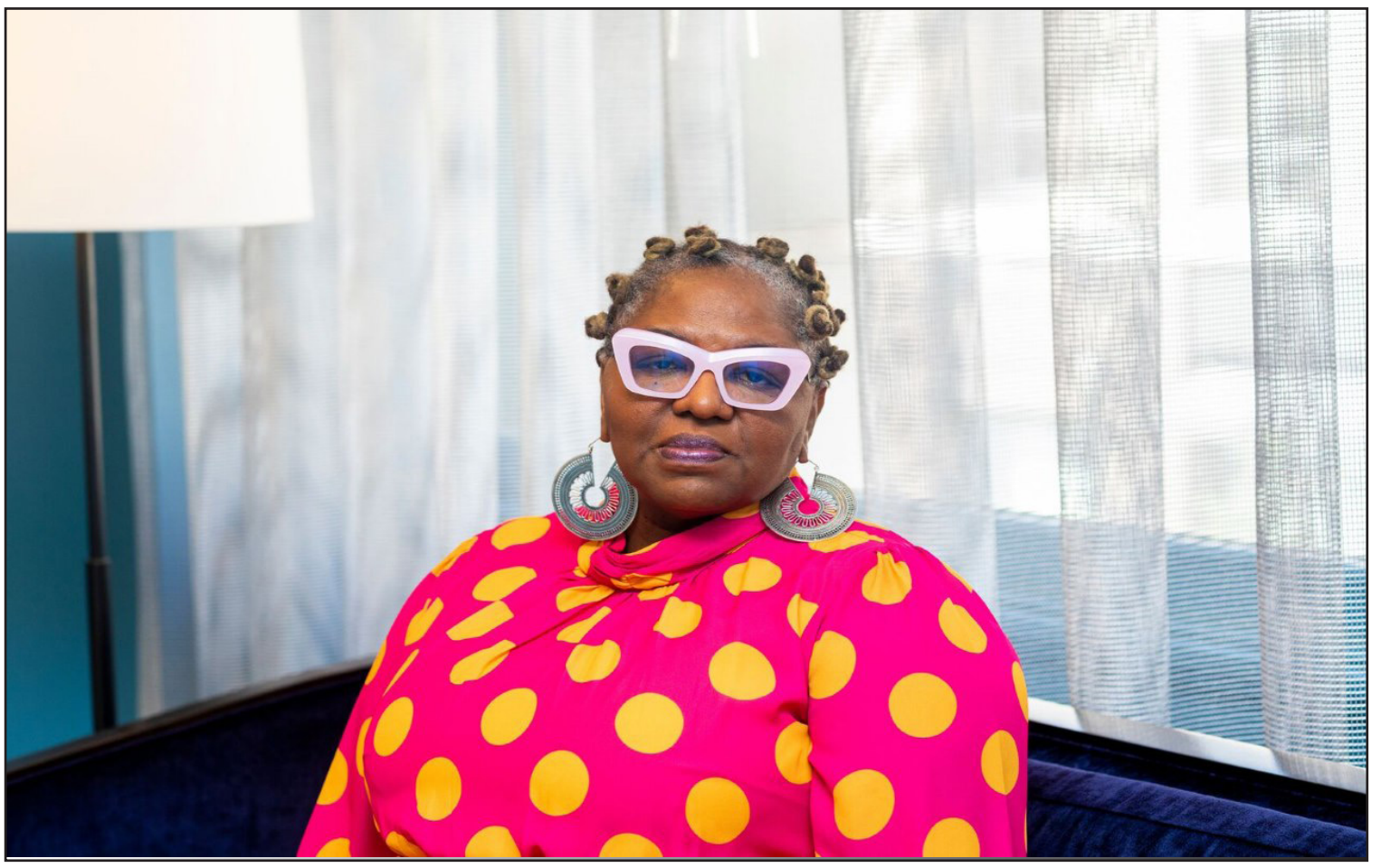


Crystal Wilkinson, Kentucky Poet Laureate and award-winning author, photographed by Carsen Bryant

A Letter From the Editor

by Arionna Thomas, Editor-in-Chief

Dear Reader,

I like to think I'm someone who's good at adapting—trying new foods, settling into a new routine, even learning to love a new place, as I've done here at Centenary. As a Communication major, I'm constantly prompted to improve upon myself—to communicate clearly, think critically, and meet every challenge with intention. But I'll admit: I struggle with change when it comes to the small things. The familiar things. Like how hearing a certain song always reminds me of my grandmother's terrible dancing in my mom's kitchen—and I have to dance the same way she does when I'm alone, a goofy smile on my face, or the world will, in fact, end. Or how my sisters and I still act out the same scene from Wicked—Elphaba leaving Glinda—with the exact same inflection every time, as if we haven't already memorized every line. Its tradition for us all.

Even with *The Conglomerate,* I've wrestled with change as an Editor: trying to figure out new workflows, hiring section writers, learning how to lead a new team of faces. Sometimes even shifting how I show up for others. It's been a challenge to balance the weight of tradition—one hundred years of writing and student voices—and the way I've known things to work in this position, with the responsibility of shaping something that reflects this moment, these people, this version of who we are and hope to be.

So, why do I say all of this? Because when putting together our special Corrington issue, I realized I wanted *The Conglomerate* to explore the space between preservation and progress. Between the comfort of what we've always done and the curiosity that pushes us to do something new. And not only explore them, but celebrate them both full-heartedly.

At *The Congo*, we are proud to honor the small things that remind us where we come from and who we're becoming. You'll find this reflected in an exclusive interview with Crystal Wilkinson, the recipient of this year's John William Corrington Award, as she discusses her book *Praisesong for the Kitchen Ghost* and other works. One of my personal favorites is the Life & Times section, where Congo staff members share recipes passed down from our families to yours. In our Sports section, we highlight the ongoing work of our athletes and coaches in fostering spaces for diversity and inclusion. And finally, we close with announcements for the Corrington Award Writing Contest!

There's a lot to take in with this issue, but I hope something here stays with you as you think about your small things - the ones you will keep and the others that grow with you.

And to *The Conglomerate* staff—thank you for all you do. I hope you are proud of this issue as I am of each of you.

Sincerely,
Arionna

An Interview with Corrington Award Winner Crystal Wilkinson

by Arionna Thomas, Editor-in-Chief

Crystal Wilkinson has established herself as a powerful and celebrated voice in American literature. As a recipient of multiple prestigious honors, including the Ernest J. Gaines Award for Literary Excellence, an NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Poetry, and winner of the 2021 O. Henry Prize, Wilkinson also made history as the first Black woman named Kentucky Poet Laureate in 2021. Her acclaimed words, such as "The Birds of Opulence" (2016), "Blackberries, Blackberries" (2000), and "Water Street" (2002), highlight the stories of Black woman in Appalachia and the rural South with lyrical depth and emotional honesty. Her latest book, *Praisesong for the Kitchen Ghost*, is a unique blend of memoir and family recipe that celebrates hertiage and storytelling through generations. This year, she is the winner of the 2025 John Willliams Corrington Awarf for Literary Excellence, and ahead of the ceremony, I had the honor of interviewing her! In our conversation, she shared more on her creative process, questions surrounding *Praisesong,* and reflected on her role as a storyteller preserving history.

1. **As I read Praisesong for the Kitchen Ghosts and talked with other students, I realized how many of us felt a kind of distance from the ancestral intimacy you write about. Many of us don't seem to have a "kitchen ghost" in our own families, our own Grandma Aggy. Do you believe there is a disconnect between how generations experience legacy and tradition?**
Wilkinson: I'm not sure if there is a disconnect because when I was a student, when I was your age, I had no idea of Grandma Aggy and my knowledge even of my grandmother was limited. This generational legacy that I've written about has been a gathering of information and stories from over time throughout my life. I did not have immediate access to my familial history in any kind of automatic way. I had to ask for the stories and I had to conduct hours of research. I even hired a research firm at one point.

2. **When you became Kentucky's Poet Laureate in 2021, you said you wanted to highlight writers who've been creating quietly, outside of notice. How do you think institutional honors, like the John William Corrington Award you're receiving, shift which stories get told? And are there still voices you hope to help bring forward?**
Wilkinson**:** When I was Poet Laureate of Kentucky I immediately knew that I wanted to work with elder writer and younger writers and to somehow put them in the same room. I think that many young writers write to their peers and they really never get a chance to interact with seasoned writers and I wanted to help make that happen in some way. I also realized that an emerging writer can be seven years old but an emerging writer can also be 70 years old and so I wanted to help create community for these writers in some way. During my work as poet laureate, that was made possible through a podcast. Ideally, I would have liked to have had in-person workshops and events with those writers but I held the position during the initial spread of Covid-19 so I had to be innovative in my approach. As far as the John William Corrington Award is concerned, I'm very honored to receive it. John Corrington and his wife Joyce made a huge impact on writers, readers and a general viewing audience during their impressive careers in poetry, fiction and in the television series' they created.

3. **Your writing often moves between genres – from poetry to short stories to nonfiction. How do you decide what form a story or memory should take when you sit down to write it?**
Wilkinson: At some point in my writing career I made a decision to not be a sort of bifurcated writer. I realized that my poetry self and my prose self could live together and how my writing could take on new meaning if I embraced all of those genres simultaneously. It took writing my novel The Birds of Opulence to get me to that and I think that just like visual artists have particular tonal shifts in their work that writers do as well. There is the well-known story of Picasso's blue period after the death of a dear friend. I think that after the death of my grandparents and my mother, my writing changed. Not necessarily a blue period but the changes concerned voice and style. I embraced lyrical language while writing prose.....It was freeing not to have to decide whether I was writing poetry or fiction or nonfiction but to lean into a more hybrid style.

4. **In your This is TASTE interview with Matt Rodbard, you referred to how researching your family stories revealed "pieces" you didn't know. When did your writing surprise you the most?**
Wilkinson: In Praisesong I was most surprised by how emotional it was to write about food and that food provided a lens to process grief, joy, and healing. I think that when a writer opens themselves up to writing, that there should be surprises. There should be moments that you feel like flinching. There should be moments that you feel as if you are telling secrets or revealing too much.

5. **In Perfect Black, your poem "Kitchen Ghost" really stayed with me, especially the line: "Sometimes the dead just stand in my office when the emails glare / when the boss needs one more report / when the words I write won't come." That moment feels so human for us as Black women. Do you think of haunting as something comforting, disruptive, or both?**
Wilkinson: Oh definitely both! I often tell my writing students to write what haunts them. And of course by that I don't mean a Halloween kind of haunting, I mean a deeper more complicated haunting of things that you think about. Things that take hold and don't let you go for years. Memories, experiences, things that dance in your imagination. There are things that rest on our minds for years. Things that we are curious about. Things that we try to rid ourselves of. These are the places that good writing comes from.I encourage writers to go the red hot center of those things that matter most to them without flinching.

6. **As a novice poet, I've noticed I'm very drawn to how a poem sounds, its rhythm, its music, the way certain lines almost hum in my mouth! I know you've talked about how music, from gospel to Prince, has shaped your creative rhythm. Do your poems, in Perfect Black or otherwise, ever start with a sound before an image or idea?**
Wilkinson: This is a great question! I think I experience everything through voice. Early on in my writing practice I resisted this idea of a homogenized voice that sounded like middle America or sounded like a television news anchor in my head. I wanted my stories, my poems to sound like the voices I grew up with and I wanted the reader to know those voices were/are as powerful as the homogenized voice. So yes, I actually hear the story when I'm writing it. Voice plays a big part. The diction and syntax and sonic nature of words are as important to me as the words themselves.

Interview With Corrington Creative Writing Contest Winner Aaliyah Vines

by Kendra Christopher, Life & Times Section Head

Aaliyah Vines is a junior English major with two minors in French and Communications. She was this year's Corrington Creative Writing Contest Winner and we sat down with her to talk about winning the contest, her writing process, getting ready to read during the Corrington Award Ceremony, and some goals for the future.

The winning piece Aaliyah submitted to the contest was "Ready or Not" a short fiction story that features themes of nature, nostalgia, and this idea of fitting in told through the tale of a kid abducted by fairies. When hearing her name called as winner, Aaliyah mentioned feeling a mix of emotions: confused and shocked, but mostly excited. You can read "Ready or Not" in the upcoming Fall 2025 edition of Pandora.

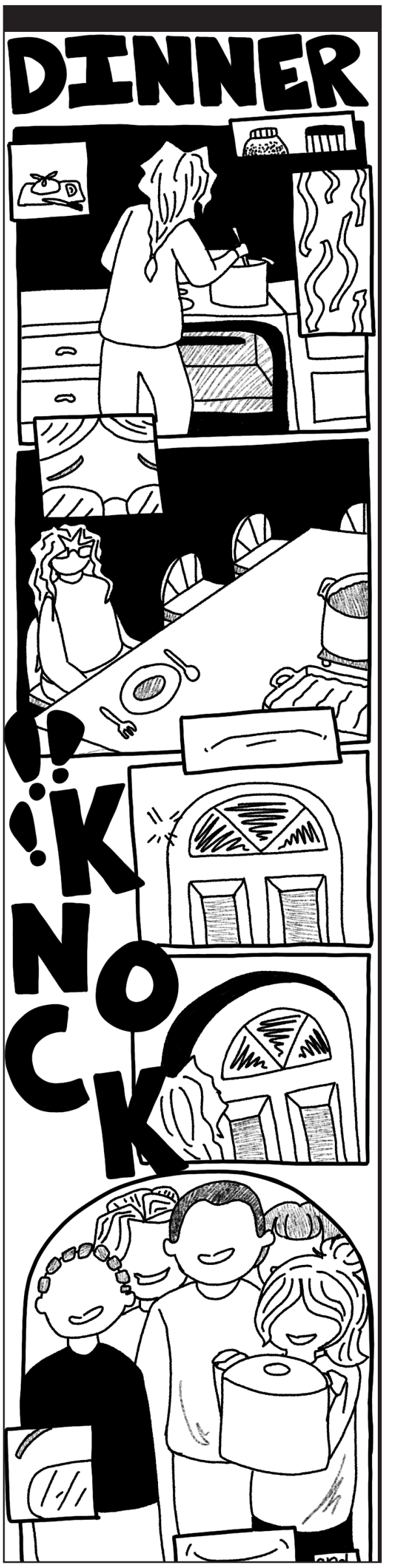
As part of the writing contest, winners are offered the opportunity to read during the Corrington Award Ceremony. Aaliyah said she selected and developed pieces in conversation with Crystal Wilkinson's *Praisesong for the Kitchen Ghosts* through the exploration of cooking and connections through food. "I kind of want to talk on different forms of connection, or connections throughout time. So not only family, but also friends or partners, things like that. I wanted these poems to go throughout different stages of life," she said.

"Ode to a Scuppernong Bush" is the first piece out of the collection Aaliyah will read. She talked about seeing multiple themes come out in this poem, how it has a speaker moving into college life but reflecting on childhood, a movement through time in that sense. It also was almost exclusively about gathering berries, not eating them. "So I saw all those things," Aaliyah said, "And I was like, what poems can I write to continue this conversation?" Each poem follows this progression through a meal, defined as gathering, preparing, gathering, eating and even cleanup, and the different relationships that can be connected to them.

Getting ready to read has been more than selecting and revising the collection, though those are no small tasks on their own. It has also involved a lot of practice of reading poetry, deciding on what context to reveal about the poems to the audience, and many meetings. At this point though, the main thing has been stress management. Aaliyah spoke about how, if she could tell her freshman self what she was doing now, she wouldn't quite believe the opportunity to read during the Corrington was hers, especially alongside a writer like Dr. Wilkinson. With that comes a level of anxiety that makes the task somewhat daunting. Still, Aaliyah has a mantra she repeats every morning to get through it: "I can do hard things. And I'm doing things I've never done before, and I'm doing them well. Or at the very least I'm doing them to get them done."

When goals for the future were brought up, Aaliyah talked about how a lot has changed in the last few years and she's constantly revising what the future might look like. Currently her dream is to be a copy editor at either a book press or publishing house. One thing is certain, that she wants to stay in the creative world, keep writing, and get her own works published. She also had this to say: "Mostly, I want to be happy, healthy, and have a dog."

We look forward to her performance during the Corrington and seeing her work in the future!



Dinner, a comic by Kendra Christopher

"I can do hard things. And I'm doing things I've never done before, and I'm doing them well. -Aaliyah Vines"

What Birthdays and Bicentennials Have in Common

by Grace Herpin, News & Worldview Section Writer

With Centenary College marking its 200th anniversary year, campus life appears charged with emotion. Banners hang from buildings, calendars are filled with events, and students are showered with reminders of the college's long and storied past. The Bicentennial is a birthday of not just one person, but a community that has grown, changed, and prospered for two centuries. It is an opportunity to look back on the stories that have shaped the college and recognize that we are now a part of that history.

This celebration of life and legacy connects strongly with Crystal Wilkinson's reflections in her chapter "Birthdays Must Be Celebrated" of *Praisesong for the Kitchen Ghosts.* Wilkinson writes about her mother, who never missed celebrating her birthday. "I got a birthday coming up," she'd say weeks or even months ahead of time, and though Wilkinson would grow tired of hearing it sometimes, she eventually understood that her mom's enthusiasm was for something greater than just the day itself (2024 p. 103). For Wilkinson's family, birthdays were not extravagant but instead about recognition and taking a moment to appreciate another year of kindness, hard work, and love.

Wilkinson also recalls her twelfth birthday when the table was set by her grandmother in balloon-print plastic and hamburgers and hot dogs were grilled on the kitchen door (2024 p. 105). It was a small, simple party but one she treasured for an eternity. The occasion did not have to be big for it to matter; it was significant because it united people. That memory is like Centenary's Bicentennial, which brings students, alumni, and faculty together to celebrate the college's age and the bonds that make it special. Wilkinson's grandmother fostered family memories with food and gathering. Centenary fosters the same type of connection between generations with community and tradition.

Centenary's family is taking this opportunity to celebrate what we have accomplished and what we have ahead of us. Both stories remind us that observing time in joy and remembrance lends meaning to the past and energy to the future. Birthdays celebrate one life. A bicentennial celebrates a shared one. Both force us to take in the view, be thankful, and remember that time itself is something worth observing.

This is the same sense of recognition and gratitude that propels Centenary's Bicentennial. It is not just counting years to commemorate 200; it is commemorating the people who have played a role in making Centenary what it is now. Professors who shared their knowledge, students who visited to pursue higher goals, and staff who supported keeping the college afloat all played a part in leaving a legacy. They all contributed something that was worth giving to the community, just as all of the members of Wilkinson's family contributed love and enthusiasm to the celebration. The Bicentennial also shows us that we're all part of something bigger than ourselves, something that began a long, long time ago before us and continues as we experience life.

Centenary College marks 200 years with the new Bicentennial Village, photographed by Centenary Marketing

From the Archives – 2001's Corrington Award

by Jo Hoffman, News & Worldview Section Writer

C.K. Williams Latest Recipient of Corrington Award

Crystal Carter
Staff Writer

In a ceremoney held in Kilpatrick Auditorium on Thursday, October 25, Pulitzer Prize-winning poet C. K. Williams was honored with the twelfth annual Corrington Award. Williams is the translator of "The Bacchae," as well as the author of *Selected Poems*, both studied in this year's First-year Rhetoric and English Senior Seminar classes.

As is tradition for the presentation of this award, the introduction and award were given followed by Williams' reading of selected works. Immediately after the reading, students were allowed to talk with the author and ask questions.

Williams was born in Newark, New Jersey in 1936 and received his education from the University of Pennsylvania. He has had experience teaching literature and writing at both Columbia University in New York City, as well as George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia. He currently lectures in Creative Writing at Princeton University, and spends some of the year abroad in France.

Williams has not only translated "The Bacchae" by Euripides, but has also translated Sophocles' play "The Women of Trachis." He has been fascinated with Greek mythology since early childhood, as his father used to tell him these stories at bedtime. "They're the basis of our civilization, for good or ill (sometimes ill), and so are essential to our cultural self-knowledge," said Williams.

As can be seen in his poetry, Williams is particularly interested in self-knowledge and the evaluation of the self. As his poetry moves through his years—particularly noticeable in *Selected Poems*—the approach to the some of the same ideas moves from a more observant manner to a more psychological approach. "My poems have a double function for me: they are about consciousness, in a more or less direct way, and they're involved just as much with the social, moral world with which my consciousness is necessarily concerned."

Williams' poetry also has a lot of personal references, both subtle and apparent. He admits that he uses his personal life within his works, but believes that his works can be looked at by themselves before relating them to his life. He follows a belief of the lyrical poet, Archilochos, the first poet of Greece: personal experience is an essential part of the work.

Williams has also received the National Book Critics Circle Award in 1987 for *Flesh and Blood* and a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1974, in addition to the 2000 Pulitzer Prize for *Repair*. Other works of Williams' include *Tar*, one of his best known works, and his most recent memoir, *Misgivings: My Father, M*

Each year Centenary C sented the Corrington Literary Ex prominent guished writ sponsored b Department Student Association, the Centena writer of scr els, and s Corrington d which time given to th David Havi been respons izing the awa

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Archival of 2001 Corrington article by former staff writer Crystal Carter, photographed by Jo Hoffman

The Corrington Award has been a pillar of institutional pride at Centenary for the past thirty-four years since it's induction. Twenty-five years ago, Conglomerate staff writer Crystal
Carter (c/o 2022) covered the 2001 Corrington Award recipient C. K. Williams. Carter covers some of his most notable works, but Williams continued to produce literature long after his award until his death in 2015.

The award's format has not changed much since its inception as seen in the article. Students are still invited to meet with the chosen author, they are presented at a ceremony, and the author plans to read from their works. Just as it was twenty-five years ago in Carter's article, we here at the Conglomerate are thrilled to meet with this year's Corrington Award winner, Crystal Wilkinson!

What's Cooking?: A Look Into Congo Staff Recipes

by Alex Ulmer, Life & Times Section Writer

Like shown in Crystal Wilkinson's *Praisesong for the Kitchen Ghost,* food and cooking are a good way to connect with family and other people you care about in the past and the present. Taste and smell are the two senses that can most easily trigger people's memories, so with Wilkinson on our minds, the Congo staff were asked to share recipes that hold special meaning to them: the dishes that remind us of home, loved ones, and moments worth keeping close. These recipes each have their own story and connection, and they are meant to be passed from one kitchen to another. Here are some of the staff's! Enjoy!

Jaszmyne Jackson's *The Jackson Family's ENCHANTED Tea Cakes!*

"This recipe is meaningful to me because me and my mother always make it together! This recipe is also pretty easy to bake and they taste super delicious and sweet! And because they're so sweet and easy to make, the both of us will add in pecans for her and sprinkles for me into a certain amount of them to give them that little added fun and special something"

Tea cakes are soft, old-fashioned cookies that have a texture between a cake and a cookie and are often served with tea. Depending on the regional variety, they can also refer to yeasted buns, chocolate-covered marshmallows, or buttery snowball cookies!

Prep: 10 min. Bake: 10 min.
Batch yield: 5 dozen.

Ingredients:
1 cup butter, softened
1-1/2 cups sugar
3 large eggs, room temperature
1 tablespoon vanilla extract
3 cups all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt

Directions: 1. Preheat oven to 375°. In a large bowl, cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy, about 5 minutes. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in vanilla. Combine the flour, baking powder, and salt; gradually add to the creamed mixture (the dough will be soft). 2. Drop by tablespoonfuls 2 in. apart onto greased baking sheets. Bake until the edges are golden brown, 7-8 minutes. Remove to wire racks to cool.

Amaya Mays's *Hot Honey Chicken Mac n Cheese*

"This recipe means a lot to me because it reminds me of the comfort of home and the excitement of trying something new. The mac and cheese feels nostalgic and cozy, while the hot honey chicken adds a bold twist that makes it feel like mine. It's a mix of my love for comfort food and my personality—warm, a little spicy, and full of flavor."

Ingredients for Chicken:
2 lbs chicken thighs, cut bite-size
2 cups buttermilk
¼ cup hot sauce
2 tsp each garlic powder, paprika, onion powder, salt, pepper
1 tsp cayenne
2 cups flour
1 cup cornstarch

Ingredients for Mac & Cheese:
4 tbsp butter
Same spices as above
16 oz heavy cream
1½ cups each cheddar & Colby Jack cheese
1 lb elbow macaroni

Ingredients for Hot Honey:
3 tbsp butter
¼ cup honey
1 tbsp lemon juice
1 tsp cayenne

Directions: 1. Marinate Chicken: Mix buttermilk, hot sauce, and spices. Add chicken, cover, and chill a few hours. 2. Make Mac & Cheese: Melt butter with spices, stir in cream, then cheese until smooth. Mix with cooked pasta and bake at 375°F for 15 mins. 3. Fry Chicken: Coat marinated chicken in flour, cornstarch, and spices. Fry at 350°F for 5–7 mins until golden. 4. Make Hot Honey: Melt butter, and stir in honey, lemon juice, and cayenne. 5. Assemble: Toss chicken in hot honey and pile over the pasta. Serve warm.

Jo Hoffman's *Hoffman's Gumbo*

"My family isn't native to Louisiana, but this is the first recipe my dad wrote down after watching some close friends make theirs. I'm still skeptical about the Rotel, but he swears it's a must!"

This is a traditional Acadiana-style Gumbo. It's typically served over rice or potato salad.

Ingredients:
15 chicken thighs
3 packs of andouille sausage
2 jars of dark savoie's roux
64 oz of holy trinity
2 large boxes of chicken broth
1 jar of chicken base
Thyme
Gumbo filé
Worcestershire sauce
Bay leaves
2 cans of Rotel

Directions: In the pot, add 2 boxes of chicken broth. Fill with water till 2/3 full. Add two cans of Rotel. Add 64 oz of holy trinity. Add 6-10 bay leaves. Add four dashes of thyme. Add several dashes of gumbo filé. Add a few tbs of Worcestershire sauce. Bring that to a boil. Bring off boil, add sausage. Bring back to a boil. Boil for 20-30 minutes. Heat roux for 3 minutes. Add roux to pot 4 spoons at a time. Reduce to medium, simmer for 2 hours. Add chicken and half a jar of chicken base; cook for another hour.

Jarrett Parr's *Banana Pudding*

"Banana pudding is something my Memaw made for ages and then she gave the recipe to my Mom (don't tell Memaw, but my Mom's version is better). At any family gathering or special event or just when she felt like it, a banana pudding would be sitting on the counter ready to be scooped into bowls."

It's a pretty straightforward mixture of bananas, pudding, whipped cream, and vanilla wafers. Real soft and real tasty and kinda burns your throat a little.

Ingredients:
2 cups cold milk
1 (5-ounce) package instant vanilla pudding mix
1 (14-ounce) can sweetened condensed milk
1 tablespoon vanilla extract
1 (12-ounce) container frozen whipped topping, thawed
1 (16-ounce) package vanilla wafers
12 small bananas, sliced or more as needed

Directions: Place milk and pudding mix in a large bowl; beat with a whisk for 2 minutes. Whisk in condensed milk until smooth. Stir in vanilla, then fold in whipped topping. Arrange a layer of wafers in the bottom of a glass serving bowl. Top with a layer of banana slices, then a layer of pudding mixture; repeat layers until all ingredients are used. For best results, chill pudding in the refrigerator for at least 1 hour before serving. Top with extra crushed wafers just before serving.

Like these recipes? Scan the QR code to explore the full collection of recipes from our staff!

Cristal Evans's *Chocolate Chip Cookies*

Chocolate chip cookies have never let me down. They're my go-to when I feel down. The best recipe a college student needs!

1 cup salted butter softened
1 cup granulated sugar
1 cup light brown sugar packed
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
2 large eggs
3 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon sea salt
2 cups chocolate chips (12 oz)

Instructions: Preheat oven to 375 degrees Fahrenheit (190 degrees Celsius). Line three baking sheets with parchment paper and set aside. In a medium bowl mix flour, baking soda, baking powder, and salt. Set aside. Cream together butter and sugars until combined. Beat in eggs and vanilla until light (about 1 minute). Mix in the dry ingredients until combined. Add chocolate chips and mix well. Roll 2-3 tablespoons (depending on how large you like your cookies) of dough at a time into balls and place them evenly spaced on your prepared cookie sheets. Bake in a preheated oven for approximately 8-10 minutes. Take them out when they are just barely starting to turn brown. Let them sit on the baking pan for 5 minutes before removing them to the cooling rack.

Athletics play thier respected sports on Atkins Feild, photographered and designed by Jaeden Thrasher

Breaking Down Barriers: Diversity in Sports

by Laine Sullivan, Sports Section Head

The community that is Centenary College is filled with students of various backgrounds, ethnicities, and religions. Out of the student body, 42% of students are classified as minorities, while the boy/girl ratio sits at an impressive 50/50%. This remains true in the college's athletic department, which makes up a majority of the student body. Not only are various ethnicities represented amongst student athletes, but throughout their respective coaches, as well.

Diversity, though now celebrated and encouraged, was not always accepted within universities, with many minority individuals not allowed to seek a higher education in any sense. However, many DIII colleges and universities have been proactive in welcoming a diverse student population, with Centenary being highly successful in this. Athletics is a particular area where diversity is not only encouraged, but necessary to provide the best performing team possible. Coaches here at Centenary are very well educated on the complexities and need for diversity amongst all races. This is not only true in a collegiate environment, but in professional organizations, as well. For instance, African American men make up 70% players in the NFL, but have had a recent record of diversity within the league and team employees. Similarly, while the NHL has primarily caucasian men, it has had a significant increase in African American players over the past two years. This shows that incorporating a diverse roster is not temporary, but an ongoing necessity for success.

This change in athletics has not only increased the value of the game but has also addressed social and ethical issues, including equal pay among all diverse groups. Along with this progression of sport, there has been a recent surplus of media coverage on players who are part of minorities. In the past, this would have never been possible due to derogatory societal expectations. This progression of diversity has also made it easier for those who are part of a minority to have the same educational and athletic opportunities as those of caucasian students and adults. Not only does this open doors for minorities, but it also allows for athletics to continue progressing through inclusivity and acceptance. Without these major shifts, the world of athletics would be vastly different. For instance, if Moses Fleetwood Walker, the first black man to play in an MLB game openly, had not had the personal courage or been accepted by his teammates, the course of modern Major League Baseball would look far different than today.

Though Centenary College and its students encourage a diverse group of future leaders, not all universities, workplaces, or athletic teams are as accepting. Diverse groups, though much more widely accepted, still face racism and exclusion throughout the country and world As stated before, this is not a resolution of any sort, but a step in the right direction to promote acceptance and diversity. Whether you are an athlete, student, coach, or teacher, it is your leadership and guidance that can and will change the standards of the world.

Coach Dawson Exemplifies Centenary Excellence

by Jarrett Parr, Sports Section Writer

In its third year of existence, Centenary football has been at the forefront of minds and conversation. Lacking in facilities, a winning record, and much of a solid footing, it is tempting to ask countless questions. Why talk about Centenary football? Why go to the games? Why do players commit to Centenary? The simple answer is Coach Byron Dawson.

In conversation with players about their time at Centenary, it takes little time before coach Dawson is brought up. On why he chose Centenary, Freshman Abram Wardell said, "I think Coach Dawson, of course, has a really good program, a really good foundation. And he's been around Shreveport and really buys into the love of the city." Wardell went on to praise other coaches before returning, stating, "I just thought Coach Dawson was building something special."

It is not just Freshman. Junior Zin'Tayvious Smith repeatedly alluded to the culture Coach Dawson is attempting to create with the football team. On Coach Dawson's vision, Smith stated that militancy was the goal. "Instead of just looking at the main goal, we're knocking out every little milestone before we get to the big goal." At the collegiate level, a head coach like Dawson is imperative. Smith later said, "we might see [Coach Dawson] more than our fathers for these four years. So he's pushing, 'oh, okay, I got to show you how to be a man.'"

Coach Dawson began his football career at Evangel Christian Academy. While playing for Evangel, Dawson was a part of three state championships, earned USA Today High School All-American Defensive MVP Honors, and, outside of football, won two state titles in shot put. He then played for LSU for four years, helping the team win the SEC Championship in 2001.
Dawson coached at Evangel for 15 years, going to the Louisiana State Championship on seven separate occasions. After briefly coaching for Tulane, Dawson signed on as Centenary's head football coach in 2022.

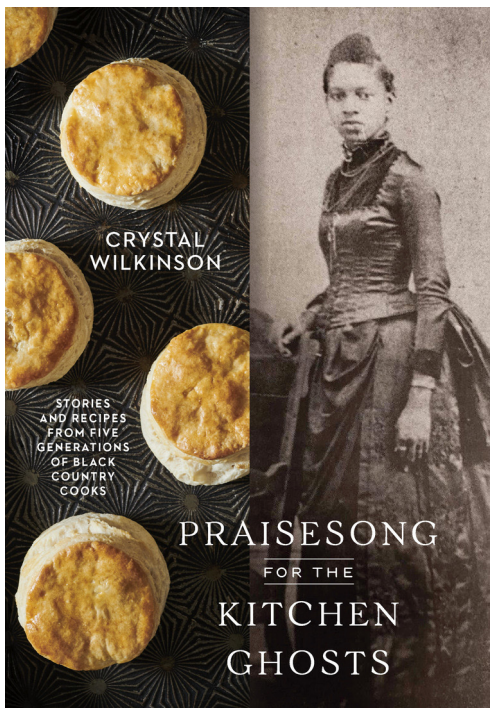
On his time as a player and coach at Evangel, Coach Dawson stated, "I think the biggest thing that I took from Evangel is the importance of believing that you can." He went on to add, "when you want a dream, when you want to get things done, you can't wait around, you got to attack today, and you got to do the little things."

Outside of football, Coach Dawson has contributed significantly to the Shreveport-Bossier community. For his history and continued effort in leadership and service to the community, Coach Dawson was awarded 2025 Top Business Professional of the Year. While Coach Dawson alone is not enough to answer all the questions the Centenary community has about the future, there should be no doubt that he fully embodies the ideals of Centenary College and its place in the wider Shreveport community.

"I think the biggest thing that I took from Evangel is the importance of believing that you can."
- Coach Byron Dawson

Corrington Award Writing Contests Open

by Arionna Thomas, Editor-in-Chief


CRYSTAL WILKINSON
STORIES AND RECIPES FROM FIVE GENERATIONS OF BLACK COUNTRY COOKS
PRAISESONG FOR THE KITCHEN GHOSTS

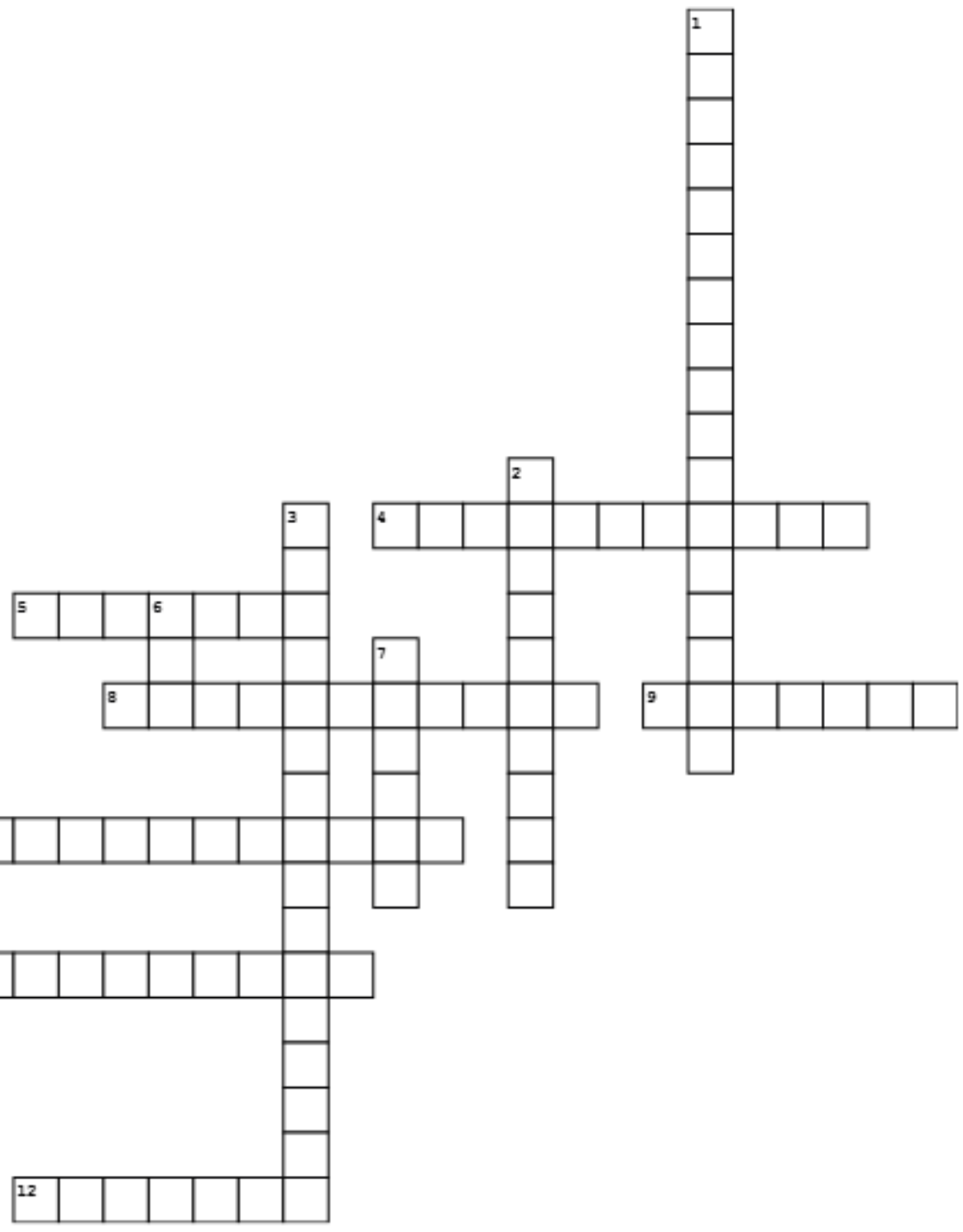
It's that time of year again! If you are inspired by this year's Corrington Award winner or the pieces our staff have created to celebrate, you're encouraged to submit your own work to the 2025 Corrington Award Writing Contest. Presented by the English Department, this annual contest invites Centenary College students to engage deeply with storytelling, heritage, and personal voice through two exciting categories: the Creative Writing Contest and the First-Year Essay Contest.

The Creative Writing Contest is open to all students and welcomes submissions in any creative genre—fiction, poetry, creative nonfiction, and more. This year, entries should take inspiration from the work of Crystal Wilkinson, whose writing explores themes such as food, foodways, ancestral inheritance, and cultural memory. Writers are encouraged to reflect on these themes in their own unique and imaginative ways. The first-place winner will receive $250, publication in *Pandora* (Centenary's literary journal), and the opportunity to perform their work at the 2026 Corrington Awards Ceremony. Second place will receive $100, and third place will receive $50.

Meanwhile, the First-Year Essay Contest is specifically for first-year students and offers a platform to weave together personal experience with the same themes that shape Wilkinson's work. In a 1,000–1,500 word essay, students are invited to reflect on how identity, heritage, food, and story shape their lives and communities. The top essay will be awarded $250 and published in *The Congo* during the spring semester. Second and third place will receive $100 and $50, respectively.

Both contests celebrate the power of student voices and the importance of storytelling. Whether you are a poet, a short story writer, or an essayist just beginning to explore your voice, the Corrington Award Writing Contest is a chance to gain recognition, be published, and share your work with a wider audience! Submissions are now open, and the deadline to apply is December 5, 2025. For full details on how to submit, please visit the English Department Faculty or scan the QR codes on the flyers hanging around campus for more information!

Corrington Crossword



Across

4. The first winner of the Corrington Award
5. Corrington author's story that serves as the basis for the film "American Fiction"
8. Winner for her work as the first "first major woman poet in the Irish poetic tradition."
9. Academic department that Bill Corrington taught in
10. the 2025 Corrington Award recipient
11. 18th US Poet Laureate and Corrington Award recipient
12. One of two families who sponsor the award

Down

1. The year of the first Award
2. One of two families who sponsor the award
3. Michael Longley and Paul Muldoon were both part of the Belfast Group of poets at this university
6. Centenary organization that helps sponsor the Award
7. Mary Jo Saltar (2022) is the editor of this well-known poetry anthology